

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT USNATO 1220 ACTION SECSTATE 5 MARCH.

QUOTE

S E C R E T USNATO 1220

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NATO

SUBJ: SITUATION IN THE SOUTHERN REGION

FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER FROM AMBASSADOR BRUCE

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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS SECDEF, USNMR SHAPE AND USDOCOSOUTH

1. SUMMARY: THERE NOW EXISTS A CRITICAL SITUATION IN THE NATO
SOUTHERN REGION--A SITUATION SO COMPLEX AND SERIOUS AS TO THREATEN

THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE ALLIANCE AS WE HAVE KNOWN IT.

2. BOTH THE GENERAL POLITICAL-MILITARY SITUATION IN NATO'S SOUTHERN REGION AND THE STATE OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS HAVE UNDERGONE PROFOUND CHANGES SINCE THE U.S. FIRST INTRODUCED A MAJOR MILITARY PRESENCE INTO THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO. THESE CHANGES HAVE ERODED OUR MILITARY POSITION IN THAT AREA AND THE INFLUENCE THAT WASHINGTON CAN WIELD; BUT EACH AND EVERY POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITMENT REMAINS UNDIMINISHED. TODAY'S CHALLENGES THEREFORE ARE MORE IMPOSING THAN THOSE OF 25 YEARS AGO WHEN WEIGHED AGAINST: (1) THE STILL VALID NATO GOAL OF DETERRING THE WARSAW PACT FROM TAKING OR THREATENING TO TAKE HOSTILE ACTION AGAINST THE ALLIES; AND (2) THE UNILATERAL U.S. GOAL OF REDUCING THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND MAINTAINING AN ACCEPTABLE BALANCE OF POWER IN THAT UNSETTLED REGION.

3. THE MISSION BELIEVES THAT A RE-EXAMINATION OF EXISTING U.S. POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITMENTS TO THE SOUTHERN REGION (AND A THOROUGH REVIEW OF THE U.S. AND ALLIED FORCE STRUCTURE WHICH SUPPORTS THEM) IS IN ORDER. ARE THEY STILL COMPATIBLE WITH THE U.S. NATIONAL INTEREST AND WITH ALLIANCE SECURITY REQUIREMENTS? ARE THE MILITARY FORCES AND THE U.S. COMMITMENTS WHICH WE NOW MAINTAIN IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA CONSISTENT WITH THE CHANGED AND STEADILY CHANGING ENVIRONMENT? END SUMMARY.

4. FROM THE LATE 19740S UNTIL THE MID-60S, THE MEDITERRANEAN WAS AN "AMERICAN LAKE." THE VESTIGES OF BRITISH AND FRENCH COLONIAL AND MILITARY POWER WERE STILL IN EVIDENCE, BUT THE DOMINANT FACT WAS THE UNITED STATES' PRESENCE, SYMBOLIZED BY THE SIXTH FLEET AND AN IMPRESSIVE COMPLEX OF AIR AND SEA SUPPORT FACILITIES THAT RINGED THE MEDITERRANEAN AND INTERLOCKED WITH THE MILITARY FORCES OF WILLING ALLIES WHOSE POLITICAL LEADERS TOOK HEART FROM THE IMPRESSIVE AMERICAN PRESENCE. SINCE THE MID-60S, THE MILITARY DOMINANCE OF ALLIED FORCES IN THE SOUTHERN REGION HAS DECLINED SHARPLY AND STEADILY; US MILITARY FORCES ARE OPERATING UNDER EVER-TIGHTENING RESTRAINTS. THE US INTERVENED MILITARILY ON A UNILATERAL BASIS IN LEBANON IN 1958; THE US INTERVENED UNILATERALLY IN SYRIA IN 1976; THE US INTERVENED UNILATERALLY IN JORDAN IN 1970. THERE IS NOW GOOD REASON TO DOUBT THAT AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES WILL IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE BE AS WELCOME IN THE AREA AS THEY ONCE WERE.

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LATERALLY IN A DIFFERENT MANNER IN JORDAN IN 1970. THERE IS NOW GOOD REASON TO DOUBT THAT AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES WILL IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE BE AS WELCOME IN THE AREA AS THEY ONCE WERE.

5. SOME OF THE MILESTONES IN THE DECLINE HAVE BEEN:

A. SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN HAS GROWN GRADUALLY AND HAS BECOME A POTENT AND PERMANENT FACT WHICH AFFECTS POPULAR ATTITUDES AND THE POLITICAL THINKING IN EVERY LITTORAL STATE; AND IT IS ONE WHICH THE US MUST ALSO TAKE INTO FULL ACCOUNT IN FRAMING POLITICAL POLICY AND DRAFTING MILITARY PLANS.

B. FRANCES WITHDRAWAL FROM NATO IN 1966 WEAKENED THE ALLIANCE'S

MILITARY POSITION APPRECIABLE. FRENCH NAVAL UNITS HAVE CONTINUED TO COOPERATE BILATERALLY OR MULTILATERALLY WITH VARIOUS ALLIES IN SOME EXERCISES--AND EVEN IN CERTAIN EXERCISES THAT WERE IN FACT NATO EXERCISES. HOWEVER, FRANCE'S CONTRIBUTION TO COORDINATED DEFENSE IN THE REGION IS LESS THAN COMPLETE AND IT IS STILL SORELY MISSED.

C. THE ALLIES HAVE LOST ALMOST ALL OF THEIR MILITARY FACILITIES IN NORTH AFRICA: EGYPT, LIBYA, TUNISIA, ALGERIA, MOROCCO. IN MOST RECENT TIMES THE ENFORCED WITHDRAWAL OF THE US AIR FORCE AND THE BRITISH ARMY FROM LIBYA FOLLOWED BY THE EXPULSION OF UK FORCES FROM MALTA HAS SEVERELY REDUCED THE INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABLE TO THOSE MOBILE ALLIED UNITS WHICH ARE SO IMPORTANT TO THE COMMON DEFENSE.

D. THE TRIPARTITE DECLARATION OF 1950 (US-UK-FRANCE) NOW LIES IN THE ARCHIVES. EVER SINCE IT LOST POLITICAL VALIDITY, THE ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE HAS DIVIDED THE ALLIES. THAT DISAGREEMENT MANIFESTED ITSELF FIRST IN ONE FORM DURING THE 1956 SUEZ CRISIS; IT SURFACED AGAIN ELEVEN YEARS LATER IN A TOTALLY DIFFERENT FORM AND ONLY BRIEFLY DURING THE SIX DAYS' WAR. HOWEVER, IN THE 1973 CONFLICT MOST EUROPEAN ALLIES, YIELDING TO EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL PRESSURES ALLOWED THE WHOLE WORLD TO SEE THEIR OUTRIGHT OPPOSITION TO US POLICIES. THE UNWILLINGNESS OF THE ALLIES TO ALLOW THE US TO USE AMERICAN FORCES AND AMERICAN SUPPLIES POSITIONED IN EUROPE EFFECTIVELY DENIED WASHINGTON THE USE OF THE CONTINENT AS A STAGING AREA FOR NON-NATO RELATED PURPOSES. SIMILAR RECALCITRANCE BY ALLIED
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GOVERNMENTS IN THE FUTURE REMAINS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY - AND WOULD NOT BE WITHOUT SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.

E. ITALY HAS RECENTLY CUT ITS DEFENSE BUDGET, POSTPONING INDEFINITELY THE PROCUREMENT OF BADLY NEEDED MODERN EQUIPMENT, AND THUS FURTHER REDUCING HER CONTRIBUTION TO COLLECTIVE DEFENSE.

F. GREECE WITHDREW THE HELLENIC ARMED FORCES FROM THE ALLIED INTEGRATED MILITARY STRUCTURE LAST SUMMER IN AN AMBIGUOUS MANNER THAT IS YET TO BE FULLY DEFINED; AND ATHENS HAS NOW BEGUN TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE US ON THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN MILITARY BASES. IN ANY EVENT, ALLIANCE DEFENSES ARE WEAKER THAN THEY WERE BEFORE CYPRUS.

G. ECONOMIC PRESSURES ARE UNDERCUTTING THE DEFENSE EFFORT OF ALL THE SOUTHERN EUROPEAN ALLIES. THOSE SAME PRESSURES HAVE ALSO COMPELLED THE UK WHICH HAS TRADITIONALLY MADE A SUBSTANTIAL FIXED AND MOBILE CONTRIBUTION TO THE COLLECTIVE DEFENSE OF THE AREA, TO DECIDE TO PHASE OUT THE BRITISH MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

6. TRENDS PRESENTLY VISIBLE POINT TO A FURTHER DETERIORATION

IN THE SOUTHERN REGION:

A. BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL TIES WITH TURKEY HAVE BEEN WEAKENED AS A RESULT OF THE EVENTS IN CYPRUS AND THE ENSUING STALEMATE; AND THE CONGRESSIONAL BAN ON MILITARY AID AND MILITARY SALES TO TURKEY HAS FURTHER IRRITATED THOSE RELATIONS.

B. THE CYPRUS DISPUTE HAS CAUSED THE GREEK GOVERNMENT TO INITIATE DISCUSSIONS WHICH MUST, ALMOST INEVITABLY, LEAD TO CLOSING OF CERTAIN US AND NATO MILITARY BASES IN GREECE; BOTH WASHINGTON AND NATO APPEAR TO BE ABOUT TO ENGAGE IN WHAT ONE MIGHT FAIRLY DESCRIBE AS A DAMAGE-LIMITING OPERATION.

C. HMG'S DECISION TO PHASE OUT ITS MEDITERRANEAN DEFENSE ROLE AND TO SLASH MOBILE FORCES MAINTAINED IN THE UK WILL STRAIN THE CONVENTIONAL DEFENSE CAPABILITIES OF ITALY, GREECE AND TURKEY AND IT WILL LEAVE THE US AS THE ONLY NON-LITTORAL WESTERN ALLY WITH SIGNIFICANT MILITARY UNITS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

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D. POLITICAL TRENDS IN LISBON HAVE MADE PORTUGAL A LESS RELIABLE ALLY; THE FUTURE OF THE AZORES BASE AWAITS NEGOTIATION.

E. GOVERNMENTS INSTABILITY IN ITALY GREATLY DIMINISHES THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY STRENGTH OF THE ALLIANCE. IN TIMES PAST ROME GAVE ALMOST AUTOMATIC COOPERATION TO US AND NATO INITIATIVES; BUT NOW THE GOI EVIDENCES INDECISION AND EVEN RELUC
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